

IN THE CLAIMS

*The status of the claims as presently amended is as follows:*

1. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus comprising:

a storage unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively;

a start program management unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs; and

a license management unit that permits use of the plurality of programs on a program-by-program basis,

wherein said license management unit comprises:

a license information acquisition unit that acquires license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program designated from an external unit ~~to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;~~ and

a ~~setting unit that sets a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;~~ and

a comparison unit that compares ~~the program that has been set by said setting unit to the program identified by the program specifying information with~~ the start program identification information, ~~by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management unit,~~ when the apparatus specifying information included in the license information acquired by said license information acquisition unit and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs,

wherein ~~said setting unit sets the program specified by the program specifying information~~ start program management unit changes the start program identification information corresponding to the program specified by the program specifying information to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when the program specified by the program specifying information has not been set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus in said start program management unit as the result of comparison by said comparison unit.

2. (*Previously Presented*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising an input unit via which information is inputtable by operation of an operator, and an external storage unit that holds the license information, and

wherein said license information acquisition unit is responsive to input of predetermined instruction information via said input unit by the operation of the operator, for reading and acquiring the license information from said external storage unit.

3. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a communication unit that communicates with ~~[[an]] the~~ external unit ~~having, which has~~ a function of inputting the license information by operation of an operator, and a function of transmitting the license information inputted by the operation of the operator, and

wherein said license information acquisition unit receives and acquires the license information transmitted from the external unit, via said communication unit.

4. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a communication unit that communicates with ~~[[an]] the~~ external unit, ~~which is~~ capable of holding the license information, and an inquiry unit that periodically inquires of the external unit via said communication unit whether the license information is held in the external unit, and

wherein said license information acquisition unit is responsive to a notification that the license information is held in the external unit, given by the external unit in response to the inquiry, for acquiring the license information from the external unit via said communication unit.

5. (*Previously Presented*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a clock unit that outputs time information, and

wherein the license information includes an expiration date of the program specified thereby, and

wherein said license management unit further comprises:

a license information holding unit that holds the license information associated with each of programs set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

an expiration date determining unit that compares the expiration date included in the license information associated with each of the programs set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus with the time information outputted from said clock unit, to thereby determine whether the expiration date has passed; and

a limiting unit that limits execution of each of the programs set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, based on a result of the determination by said expiration date determining unit.

6. (*Previously Presented*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a totalizing unit that totalizes amounts of usage of apparatus resources used by operation of the programs on a program-by-program basis, and

wherein the license information includes an upper limit of an amount of usage of resources usable by each program specified by the license information, and

wherein said license management unit further comprises:

a license information holding unit that holds the license information associated with each of programs set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a usage determining unit that determines whether the amount of usage of the apparatus resources used by each of the programs set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus has reached the upper limit thereof; and

a limiting unit that limits execution of each of the programs set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, based on a result of the determination by said usage determining unit.

7. (*Previously Presented*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the license information comprises encrypted information, and said license management unit further comprises a decrypting unit that decrypts the license information.

8. (*Currently Amended*) A method of controlling an image forming apparatus including a storage unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively, and a start program management unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs,

the method comprising:

a license information acquisition step of acquiring license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program designated from an external unit to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a setting step of setting a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus; and

a comparison step of comparing the program that has been set by said setting step to the program identified by the program specifying information with the start program identification information, by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management unit, when the apparatus specifying information included in the license information acquired in said license information acquisition step and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs[.]; and

wherein said setting step sets the program specified by the program specifying information a changing step of causing the start program management unit to change the start program identification information corresponding to the program specified by the program specifying information to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when the program specified by the program specifying information has not been set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus in the start program management unit as the result of comparison by said comparison step.

9. (*Currently Amended*) A computer-readable medium storing a computer program for controlling an image forming apparatus including a storage unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively, and a start program management unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs,

the computer program comprising:

a license information acquisition instruction for acquiring license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program designated from an external unit to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a setting instruction for setting a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus; and

a comparison instruction for comparing the program that has been set by said setting instruction to the start program identified by the program specifying information with the start program identification information, by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management unit, when the apparatus specifying information included in

the license information acquired in said license information acquisition instruction and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs~~[[,]]~~; and

~~wherein the setting instruction sets the program specified by the program specifying information~~ a changing instruction for causing the start program management unit to change the start program identification information corresponding to the program specified by the program specifying information to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when the program specified by the program specifying information has not been set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus in the start program management unit as the result of comparison by said comparison instruction.

10. *(Currently Amended)* A computer-readable storage medium storing a program for controlling an image forming apparatus including a storage unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively, and a start program management unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs,

the program comprising:

a license information acquisition module for acquiring license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program designated from an external unit ~~to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;~~

a setting module for setting a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus; and

a comparison module for comparing ~~the program that has been set by said setting module to the program identified by the program specifying information with~~ the start program identification information, by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management unit, when the apparatus specifying information included in the license information acquired by said license information acquisition module and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs~~[[,]]~~ and

wherein said setting module sets the program specified by the program specifying information a changing module for causing the start program management unit to change the start program identification information corresponding to the program specified by the program specifying information to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when the program specified by the program specifying information has not been set to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus in the start program management unit as the result of comparison by said comparison module.